

Exodus 18:1-20 - Thursday, December 11th, 2008

- In chapter 17, we saw God providing water out of "the Rock" for the Israelites, and we saw Him providing victory over the Amalekites.
- In chapter 18, Moses will be reunited with his wife and two sons along with his father-in-law Jethro after being apart for about one year.

18:1 And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people -- that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, 3 with her two sons, of whom the name of one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land") 4 and the name of the other was Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"); 5 and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. 6 Now he had said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her."

- It seems the news of what God had done for Moses and the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt had spread throughout the land.
- It's been about two months since the Exodus out of Egypt, and this good news had reached Jethro, Moses' father-in-law in Midian.
- Moses sent his wife, Zipporah, and their two sons back to her dad in Midian after a rather intense marital conflict over circumcision.

7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent. 8 And Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and how the LORD had delivered them.

- Kissing was then, and even still is now, a common way of greeting today amongst the Bedouins and those living in the Middle-East.
- Moses had quite a bit to tell his father-in-law to get him up to speed with all that God had done both in Egypt, and since the Exodus.
- It's been suggested that there must have still been some tension between Moses and Zipporah, because he first talks to Jethro instead.

9 Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the LORD had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. 10 And Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

- This would seem to indicate that Jethro may not have truly known the Lord in a personal way until Moses testified to Him what God did.
- For Jethro to say, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods," then offer sacrifices to God, is a profession of faith in the Lord.
- One has suggested that Jethro, as the Priest of Midian, may have worshipped other gods, which is why he says the Lord is greater.

13 And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. 14 So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" 15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

- Jethro observes his son in law, Moses, taking on the burden of settling disputes for 2-3 million Israelites, from dawn until dusk.
- What's interesting is that when God called Moses from the burning bush, he said no, and now he's burning the candle from both ends.
- When Jethro questions Moses about this, he tells him that he has to make known God's statutes and laws in order to resolve problems.

17 So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good. 18 Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself."

- Out of genuine concern for Moses, Jethro tells him that he cannot continue on like this or he will wear out and burn out. It's too much.
- It's interesting that he would mention how that this isn't only bad for Moses; but, that it's not really good for the people coming to Moses.
- This invites the question of why this was such a problem for Moses and even the Israelites as well. Was Moses not doing a good job?

One commentator answered it this way: "It wasn't that Moses was unfit to hear their disputes; it wasn't that he didn't care about their disputes; it wasn't that the job was beneath him, it wasn't that the people didn't want Moses to hear their disputes. The problem was simply that the job was too big for Moses to do; his energies were being spent unwisely."

- Before we move on, there's another interesting thought here that I don't want us to miss. It has to do with the "why" behind the "what."
- Let me explain. There are a number of reasons "why" Moses needed to do "what" he had to do about this burden that he had on him.
- We have to understand that the Israelites needed to go to someone who knew how to teach them the statutes and laws/Word of God.
- That someone was Moses however, as we'll see in a moment, he will have entrust the teaching of God's Word to others as well.
- Furthermore, not only must he delegate, he must also educate those to whom he will delegate, so they too can instruct in God's laws.
- I'll take it a step further; if the people who were coming to Moses knew God's laws, they wouldn't need Moses to resolve their problems.
- Not only that, but if they knew God's laws and statutes, they may not even have the number of disputes and problems in the first place.
- It's been said that if you give a man a fish, you feed him once however, if you teach a man to fish, you can feed him for a lifetime.

19 Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. 20 And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.

- Jethro now gives Moses godly counsel as to what he needs to do in order to avoid burning out with all he has been doing here-to-fore.
- He tells him that he's to first go before God for the people. In other words, go to God for the people before going to the people for God.

- If you really take a closer look at this, you'll find a very good template with much wisdom when it comes to ministering to God's people.

1. Pray for the people

2. Teach the people

3. Show the people

4. Delegate to the people (As we'll see in the next verse.)